

**For Immediate Release  
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**PRESS RELEASE**

Chief United States District Judge William J. Zloch announced today that the United States District Court reversed a previous determination to locate its 18th district judgeship in Fort Pierce, Florida at this time. The District's 18th judgeship was authorized under P.L. 107-273, effective July 15, 2003.

The assignment of judicial resources to the Fort Pierce venue was reconsidered in March 2004 when the Court was informed that the cost to design and construct suitable office space for two resident judges and court staff at the current location leased from the Fort Pierce Utilities Authority was estimated at nearly \$500,000. Construction cost considerations coupled with the unconfirmed resolution of a long-standing sewer problem at the current location counseled against undertaking the project in leased space. The sewer problem recently caused the Court to relocate trial activity until the odor could be abated from within the facility.

The court also considered the fact that a new federal courthouse for Fort Pierce is currently in design. With its construction likely to be completed in 2009, the Court determined it could forgo the immediate construction project in leased space in the interest of fiscal economy and particularly at a time when the Federal Judiciary is experiencing unprecedented budget shortfalls. In the current fiscal year, the Southern District of Florida, among the busiest federal trial courts in the country, lost eleven and one-half employees to staffing reductions necessitated by lack of funding. Annual funding allocations to the Judiciary nationally were about ten percent less than required to fully fund operations.

Finally, the Court determined that the person appointed to fill the vacant judgeship would be located in Miami rather than Fort Pierce and accommodated in existing facilities.

The federal judicial workload at Fort Pierce, including an average of about 455 filings annually over the last three years, has been determined by the Court to warrant the assignment of a full-time judicial officer. The number of cases filed at the Fort Pierce division exceeds the current national filing average per judge by about eight percent. The Court will continue its current practice of assigning Fort Pierce cases to a group of judges from within the District until the new federal courthouse is completed. At that time, a permanent district judgeship will be assigned to Fort Pierce.

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